



Addressing the Viewer in Your Artist's Statement

After our first 2020 PBP workshop, "Applying for Artist Residencies" there were two suggestions that I wanted to address. First, a question was asked about what to say regarding the "viewer" in your artist statement.

Addressing the viewer

Let's say you are trying to convey in your statement that you want to leave your audience with a feeling of discomfort after viewing your paintings.

Don't's

1. Don't tell people how they should think and/or feel - no one likes to be told what they think or feel, in art and life. If you begin a sentence with, I know what you're thinking, or You should feel ... you should probably just stop and rephrase.
2. Don't tell people what they will experience - similar to, don't tell people what they're thinking or feeling, telling someone how they should experience your work is at best rude and at worst could turn people off to your artwork permanently. What if you say I will experience discomfort when viewing your paintings, and then I don't? Am I wrong? I must not get it? Forget this -- I am going to the Museum store!

Don't Example

My work explores the relationship between the Military-Industrial Complex and UFO sightings. As complex portraits of alien creatures become transformed through frantic brush strokes and uncomfortable color and texture combinations, the spectators are left with a feeling of discomfort after viewing my paintings. Viewers will walk away with a new vision of space travel.

Do example

First Person

My work explores the relationship between the Military-Industrial Complex and UFO sightings. I paint detailed portraits of alien creatures that become transformed through frantic brush strokes and uncomfortable color and texture combinations. I use abrasive marks to convey feelings of discomfort, chaos, and fear because those are the emotions I experience when considering the state of the Military and their history with UFO sightings. Through my work, I explore these uneasy feelings and slowly begin to craft a new vision of space travel.

Third Person (artist name is Tom Cat)

Tom Cat is a painter who explores the tumultuous relationship between the Military-Industrial Complex and UFO sightings. Cat paints detailed portraits of alien creatures that become transformed through frantic brush strokes and uncomfortable color and texture combinations to convey his feelings of discomfort, chaos, and fear, and in doing so, Cat is crafting his vision of space travel.

The second nugget of feedback we received was asking for an example of a "good" artist statement. We'll use my artist statement -- because it has been through many iterations and why not embarrass myself?!

J.R. Uretsky weaves performance, video, puppetry, and sculpture into emotionally charged, affective artworks that shift seamlessly between autobiography and fiction. Uretsky's work confronts viewers with expressive confessions that test the bounds of comfort, personal space, and acceptable presence. The characters that emerge through her performances are relatable yet also alien and non-specific, forging an ambiguous space where emotion is the remaining constant.

Why is it good

1. It's short.

2. It describes...

- Who I am and what kind of stuff I make. J.R. Uretsky weaves performance, video, puppetry, and sculpture into emotionally charged, affective artworks that shift seamlessly between autobiography and fiction.
- The concepts I am exploring through my work. Uretsky's work confronts viewers with expressive confessions that test the bounds of comfort, personal space, and acceptable presence.
- Acknowledges the viewer, but focuses on my actions rather than the viewer's experience: Uretsky's work confronts viewers with expressive confessions ...
- How the work helps get those concepts across: The characters that emerge through her performances are relatable yet also alien and non-specific, forging an ambiguous space where emotion is the remaining constant.

Admittedly, after our PBP session on Sunday, I am reexamining my use of the term affective as it is referring to Affect Theory, it's artspeak-y, and emotionally charged is enough of an explanation.

If you need help with your artist statement I am happy to give feedback -- but in PBP fashion, I don't work for free! Email me and we'll work out some sort of trade. Snacks are acceptable currency in my book.

I hope this helps and thanks again for all your feedback!

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